

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:
Kansas
COUNTY:
Pottawatomie
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME					
COMMON:					
Louis Vieux Ford and Cemetery					
AND/OR HISTORIC:					
Vermillion Creek Crossing of the Oregon Trail (preferred name)					
2. LOCATION					
STREET AND NUMBER: N 1/2, NE 1/4, Sec. 24, T 9 S, R 10 E					
E 1/2, NE 1/4, SE 1/4, NW 1/4, Sec. 24, T 9 S, R 10 E					
CITY OR TOWN:			CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:		
from Belvue, 2.5 mi. west,			no. 2, Bill Roy		
3 mi. north, 1 mi. west					
STATE:		CODE:	COUNTY:		CODE:
Kansas		20	Pottawatomie		149
3. CLASSIFICATION					
CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building		<input type="checkbox"/> Public		<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied	Yes:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure		<input type="checkbox"/> Private		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Restricted
<input type="checkbox"/> Object		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both		<input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted
					<input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural		<input type="checkbox"/> Government		<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial		<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational		<input type="checkbox"/> Military		cemetery	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment		<input type="checkbox"/> Museum			
		<input type="checkbox"/> Park			
		<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence			
		<input type="checkbox"/> Religious			
		<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific			
4. OWNER OF PROPERTY					
OWNER'S NAME:					
Multiple ownership (see continuation sheet)					
STREET AND NUMBER:					
CITY OR TOWN:			STATE:	CODE:	Kansas
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION					
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:					
Register of Deeds					
STREET AND NUMBER:					
Pottawatomie County Courthouse					
CITY OR TOWN:			STATE:	CODE:	Pottawatomie
Westmoreland			Kansas 6549	20	
6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS					
TITLE OF SURVEY:					
Historic Sites Survey					
DATE OF SURVEY: April 19, 1974 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local					
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:					
Kansas State Historical Society					
STREET AND NUMBER:					
120 West Tenth Street					
CITY OR TOWN:			STATE:	CODE:	ENTRY NUMBER
Topeka			Kansas	20	
DATE					

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Barry, Louise, Beginning of the West (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1972), p. 931.
Early History of Pottawatomie County (n.p., 1954), pp. 5, 8.
 Franzwa, Gregory M., The Oregon Trail Revisited (St. Louis, Patrice Press, Inc., 1972), pp. 149-152.
Manhattan Mercury, December 3, 1972.
St. Marys Chief, January 12, 1878.
 Smith, William E., "The Oregon Trail Through Pottawatomie County," Kansas Historical Collections, v. 17 (1926-1928), pp. 435-464.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	39 ° 15 ' 24 "	96 ° 14 ' 59 "		°	'	"
NE	39 ° 15 ' 24 "	96 ° 14 ' 46 "				
SE	39 ° 15 ' 19 "	96 ° 14 ' 46 "				
SW	39 ° 15 ' 19 "	96 ° 14 ' 59 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 20

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Richard D. Pankratz, Director, Historic Sites Survey

ORGANIZATION

Kansas State Historical Society

DATE

May 17, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:

120 West Tenth Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Topeka

STATE

Kansas 66612

CODE

20

STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

Name _____

Nyle H. Miller

Title Executive Director, Kansas State Historical Society

Date June 5, 1974

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Kansas	
COUNTY Pottawatomie	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

4. Owner of nominated area in NE 1/4, Sec. 24 is Clarence Tessendorf,
Wamego, Kansas

Owner of nominated area in NW 1/4, Sec. 24 is Robert Kersey,
Wamego, Kansas

The .8 acres of Louis Vieux Cemetery was deeded to Pottawatomie
County. ~~The county also owns the present bridge over the
Vermillion.~~

8. The area of the ford and cemeteries is just below the proposed Onaga
dam and lake. The Corps of Engineers has indicated an intention to
acquire this property and to develop it as a historic site in connection
with the reservoir.

The Vermillion Creek Crossing was one of the early major river
crossings for westward travelers on the Oregon trail. Many thousands
of Oregon and California bound emigrants camped here and then crossed
the Vermillion. Louis Vieux was a significant figure to the Pottawatomie
tribe and he also provided needed services to countless pioneer travelers.

9.
Sutterlin, John Floyd, Historical Outline of Pottawatomie County,
1803-1935, Manuscript in Kansas State Historical Society Library.
Thoburn, Joseph B., A Standard History of Oklahoma, v. 5 (Chicago:
The American Historical Society, 1916), p. 2169.
Topeka Journal, July 10, 1954.
Westmoreland Recorder, July 19, 1906; June 3, 1954.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian ☐ 16th Century ☐ 18th Century ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century ☐ 17th Century ☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Western Settlement</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Vermillion Creek Crossing was a well-known campsite for travelers on the Oregon trail.

Louis Vieux, who was half-French, half-Pottawatomie, was born in 1809 where the city of Chicago now stands. Originally his name was Louis Jarveau, but it was changed to Louis Vieux on the government's tribal roll. He moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1834 and was there elected a tribal chief. In 1846 they were moved to Indianola, Kansas, the site of present day North Topeka. And in 1847 or 1848 Vieux received his allotment of reservation land, which was located on the Oregon trail, just east of where it crossed the Vermillion river. He built a log cabin on his allotment, and then constructed a toll bridge over the Vermillion near the spot where emigrants and travelers had forded the river for many years. The Vermillion was the third major crossing faced by the emigrants, after the Wakarusa and the Kansas.

Vieux charged \$1.00 for each outfit that crossed his bridge, sometimes making \$300.00 a day. He also sold hay and grain to the travelers, and some accounts mention that he had a blacksmith shop for wagon repairs and also ran a general store. The Vieux crossing was a popular resting place for users of both the Oregon trail and the Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley road since it had good water, good wood and good grass. (The Oregon trail after crossing the Vermillion ran west for one mile and then angled northwest; at that point the Fort-to-Fort road separated and continued westerly.) There was a stage stable located on the Vieux farm where horses were changed for the stage line running on the Fort-to-Fort road. At least one tragedy is known to have occurred at the Vermillion crossing; in May, 1849, approximately 50 people from a large outfit died there of Asiatic cholera and were buried on the east bank of the Vermillion. A stone was placed at the head of each grave with the name and date of burial.

Louis Vieux was an important man to his tribe, serving as business agent, interpreter and chief. He made a number of trips to Washington in behalf of the Pottawatomies. He owned much land and became very wealthy. At one time he owned the site of the town of Louisville, which was named in his honor. Louis Vieux died on May 6, 1872, and is buried, with two of his wives and several of his children, in what is known as the Louis Vieux cemetery. It is located several hundred yards east of the ford and a short distance north of where his old cabin stood.

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ Excellent

☐ Good

☒ Fair

☐ Deteriorated

☐ Ruins

☐ Unexposed

(Check One)

(Check One)

☒ Altered

☐ Unaltered

(Check One)

☐ Moved

☒ Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Vermillion Creek Crossing of the Oregon trail, the Louis Vieux cemetery, the site of Vieux's toll bridge across the Vermillion and the cholera victims' cemetery are all located in close proximity to each other in an area encompassing about 20 acres.

The Louis Vieux Cemetery is located on a hill several hundred yards east of the Vermillion and just north of where Vieux had his cabin, blacksmith shop and stable. The cemetery is now fenced off from the surrounding pasture and is accessible to visitors by means of a turnout from an east-west rural road about 100 yards to the south. Towering over 30 grave stones in the enclosure is the monument for Louis Vieux. Many of the markers, including Louis Vieux's, have been broken and otherwise damaged over the years by weather, grazing cattle and vandals. Vieux's marker has been repaired but a number of the stones which have broken into several pieces are lying flat.

The road south of the cemetery continues west to an old iron bridge, now declared unsafe and closed to traffic. The site of the toll bridge erected by Louis Vieux is believed to be at that same spot.

The Vermillion crossing (or Vieux crossing) of the Oregon trail is 30 to 40 yards upstream from the bridge. At that spot the river bed is solid rock. (Crossings could still be made there if the creek banks were not so steep.) The river is probably wider and its banks are in all likelihood much steeper now than in Louis Vieux's time. Many large trees line both banks of the river.

Looking to the east, back up on the hill, from the area of that crossing one can see on the hillside a depressed area which might have been made by wagons approaching the crossing area. A short distance north of the crossing, on the east bank and just east of an old lane road, is the cholera victims' cemetery. Only three stones remain to mark the area and only one has a legend, which reads "T. S. Prather, May 27, 1849". Construction of that road, vandalism and time had accounted for removal of the other stones prior to 1928.

Both above and below the crossing area the Vermillion was channelized in the 1930's, but not at the spot of the crossing. The proposed Onaga dam and lake, which the Corps of Engineers plans to construct, will further alter the area. The dam will be built a mile or more upstream from the area of the nomination, but the Corps has stated its intentions of acquiring the area surrounding the crossing and cemetery for recreational/historical development.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS